

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF ECCLESIASTICAL PATRIMONIES IN SPAIN (1900-1936)*

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Spain has always been a land of contrasts. In the last two centuries a Catholic basis, strongly rooted in the social spectrum of the nation, coexisted with anticlerical streams. Among them, we can distinguish a liberal stream that aimed at the separation of Church and State but did not pursue the disappearance of Catholic religion in the country; instead, it promoted a clear definition of the function and pre-eminence of the civil power over the ecclesiastical. But we can also differentiate another stream - deeply antireligious and ever-increasing over the years as its agents' political and social positions became more radical - which played a major role during the Second Republic and the Spanish Civil War. Against this background, the history of Spain's government during the nineteenth century was a continuously swinging pendulum that alternatively led to anticlerical positions - more or less zealous depending on the ruling party - and to positions clearly favourable to the Catholic Church when the cabinet was more conservative.

The aim of this article is not to complete a detailed inventory of the properties of Spanish religious orders but to show how these orders adapted themselves to the institutional and political changes in the relationship between Church and State in Spain during the first three decades of the twentieth century. In the first section we offer a brief overview of the changes in national policies regarding religious congregations, from the 1837 confiscation and uncloistering to the Second Republic and the Civil War. The history of those years helps the reader to understand the motives behind the orders' strategies, studied in the following sections in this article, in relation to their patrimonies during the very delicate Republican years; the starting point

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of those strategies was always the deep mistrust accumulated by religious institutes against the Spanish liberal state. The core of this article is therefore the analysis of the strategies implemented by religious institutes to safeguard their patrimony against possible attempts by the State to expropriate them. The management of ecclesiastical goods by the orders aimed at maximizing the security of their properties rather than increasing their benefits. The latter was a secondary objective which could have been more easily obtained with a purely entrepreneurial management. That is, the conservative strategies established and developed by the orders permeated the properties' daily management. In section 2, the two orders selected as case studies, Benedictines and Piarists, are presented. Then section 3 focuses on the strategy of the Benedictines, which allowed them to safeguard and improve the management of the order's patrimony, while section 4 deals with the actions of the Piarists to defend and maintain the patrimony associated with their educational work during the Second Republic.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN SPAIN

Spanish nineteenth century history alternated between anticlerical and pro-clerical positions. Scientific literature has established a chronological framing of the evolution of religious orders in Spain.¹ During the first phase (1808-1837), religious orders still lived in an Ancien Régime environment that pivoted on the power of His Catholic Royal Majesty, a figure who did not hesitate to start the first confiscations of ecclesiastical goods once the Royal Treasury found itself in a predicament. Very soon, though, the orders had to sail through the troubled waters of the Ancien Régime crisis, finally to find themselves in a period of radical liberalism. In 1835 the Jesuits were expelled from the country and their goods taken over, while all convents and monasteries having less than twelve members were suppressed, "exception made of the missionary schools in the Asian provinces and of the Piarist houses".² Mendizábal, as Head of the Government, implemented the main anticlerical measures: the February 1836 Decree furthered the confiscation policy of the Cadiz Cortes (1812) and put up for sale all the goods seized from the abolished religious corporations.³ Uncloistering followed confiscation after the March 1836 Decree which "suppressed monasteries, convents, schools, congregations and other community houses belonging to masculine religious institutions, including those of the regular clergy and the four military orders".⁴

¹ Of the six phases indicated, the last two exceed the chronological framework of this article. The fifth one covers the times of the new restoration under Franco's regime (1940-1970), while the sixth includes the renewal and crisis following the social, religious and political changes after 1970. Revuelta, *La Iglesia española*, ch. 5.

² Carcel, "El liberalismo en el poder", 135.

³ Mendizábal was appointed minister of the Treasury in June 1835 and he held the position of head of the Spanish Government from September 1835 to May 1836.

⁴ Carcel, "El liberalismo en el poder", 139. This is not the place to analyse the effects, mechanisms used or patrimony affected by the ecclesiastical confiscation considering the overwhelming amount of available literature on the topic. Read for instance: Callahan, *Church, Politics and Society in Spain*; Bernecker, *España entre la tradición y la modernidad*; Cuenca Toribio, *La Iglesia española ante la revolución liberal* and Idem, *Aproximación a la historia de la Iglesia contemporánea*.

A second 'intermediate' phase started with the recomposition of moderate liberalism coinciding with the reign of Isabella II (1843-1868). During this phase, the orders progressively - though slowly - returned to Spain after 1844. The 1845 Constitution, in its 11th article, declared Catholicism the religion of the Spanish nation and assumed that the State must economically sustain the Catholic Church and faith. Subsequently, the 1851 Concordat allowed for the restoration of certain orders. The period of ecclesiastical tranquillity was interrupted to some extent in 1855 with the well-known Madoz confiscation, also called 'civil confiscation', which affected some properties of the Catholic Church as well as those of the municipalities. However, despite these isolated scares the Spanish Church and its religious orders lived quietly during the reign of Isabella II, eventually becoming the last bastion of the Isabeline monarchy.⁵

The 1868 Revolution put an end to this phase, bringing about the expulsion of the Bourbon dynasty, the ephemeral reign of Amadeo I of Savoy and the late proclamation of the even more ephemeral First Republic, coinciding with the second greatest anticlerical reaction of the nineteenth century. The so-called 'Glorious Revolution' meant the empowerment of the most progressive social groups (Democrats and Republicans), all of them characterized by their strong anticlericalism.⁶ Filled with anticlerical zeal, the members of the *Junta* of Sevilla, for example - the most progressive one in Spain on these matters - acted expeditiously when they decided, at the beginning of October that year, on "the expulsion of the Jesuits, Philippians and any other (of the) established orders, and the seizure in the name of the State of the buildings they occupied and the effects contained in them".⁷

The decades around the turn of the century were a high point in the process of restoration of the religious congregations.⁸ This third phase (1875-1931) coincides first with the Bourbon Restoration and the political 'rotation' system, through which Conservatives and Liberals alternated in the government, and then with the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera. The 1876 Constitution confirmed the Catholic character of the State, establishing that "the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion was that of the State". The objective pursued by the political architect of the Restoration system, Cánovas del Castillo, was to achieve a balance between satisfying the Church and ensuring support for the recently founded political system of the political and social groups that had carried the 1868 Revolution, while at the same time weakening the traditionalist parties. During the Restoration period, the Church recovered a significant part of its lost leading role but it did not manage to fully connect with the most progressive political sectors, despite its more sensitive attitude towards the great social movements of the period.⁹ Therefore, as time went by, tensions and

⁵ Moliner, "Anticlericalismo y revolución liberal", 104.

⁶ The main measures taken by the Revolutionary government were the usual for Spanish anticlericalism: suppression and forbidding celebrations of community meetings for the Society of Jesus, educational freedom, religious freedom, restraint on the religious communities' buying and possessing goods, extinction of all religious communities founded after 1837 - the Piarists being an exception.

⁷ Ros, *Historia de la Iglesia de Sevilla*, 670.

⁸ Callahan, "Los privilegios de la Iglesia bajo la Restauración".

⁹ Carcel, *Historia de la Iglesia en la España contemporánea*; Verdoy, *Los bienes de los jesuitas*, ch. 1.

chronic problems were generated and anticlericalism increasingly permeated Spanish society, while the Restoration system relied on the Church to survive and overwhelmed it with privileges.

Nevertheless, the third phase was not a period of permanent tranquillity. The first decade of the twentieth century brought a strong anticlerical reaction that reached its apogee in 1909-1910.¹⁰ At the beginning of the century, the Liberal Party demanded drastic measures to control the expansion of the religious orders, increase State supervision of religious schools and start the renegotiation of the 1851 Concordat; in fact, many of their proposals were quite prudently expressed.¹¹ But despite this moderate attitude of the Liberal Party, altogether this decade was marked by continuous negotiations between the consecutive Spanish governments and the Vatican, different juridical controversies between the Spanish State and the Catholic Church and the passing of constrictive laws regarding the Catholic Church.¹² In 1909, the events of the Tragic Week in Barcelona caused the burning of churches, convents and schools during a popular revolt that was severely repressed.¹³ Closing this decade, in 1910, Canalejas' government undertook the parliamentary proceeding and later passing of the so-called Padlock Law (law of 23 December 1910)¹⁴ which added pressure on the Church after previous detrimental legislation on civil marriages and cemeteries.¹⁵ With the Padlock Law, which was never actually implemented but which heavily worried the Spanish Church, the legislator aimed to limit the number of religious orders established in Spain.¹⁶ A secularizing movement came out of this intense anticlerical mobilization which later on crystallized in a potent anticlerical collective identity.¹⁷

The fourth phase is that of the great crisis and persecution during the Second Republic and the Civil War (1931-1939).¹⁸ The Second Republic followed the death throes of the Restoration: the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera. Some authors

¹⁰ Andres-Gallego, *La política religiosa en España*; De la Cueva, "Anticlericalismo e identidad anticlerical en España".

¹¹ Callahan, "Los privilegios de la Iglesia bajo la Restauración", 30-31.

¹² Montero, "La Restauración", 354-362 and 472-477.

¹³ During the Tragic Week in Barcelona 21 churches and 40 convents were assaulted and burnt. Bernecker, *España entre la tradición y la modernidad*, 207-209.

¹⁴ Díaz, "La 'Ley del Candado' en Álava", 145-146.

¹⁵ There had been some previous attempts. "For example, in 1906 it was proposed to deprive religious orders of juridical personality to prohibit their receiving gifts or legacies [...] to prohibit minors from joining orders without consent of their parents and to give liberty to dissolve orders which included foreigners". Branden, *Church and State in Spain*, 212.

¹⁶ In reality, however, the fear-inspiring law was a compromise solution negotiated by Conservatives and Liberals. It closed the door to new orders wishing to settle in Spain while almost all the existing orders were already active in the country. The law actually amounted to nothing because a clause added at the end of the negotiations stated that the Padlock Law would expire in a period of two years if in the meantime a Law of Associations was not enacted. Tusell, *Historia de España*, 93.

¹⁷ De la Cueva, "Anticlericalismo e identidad anticlerical en España", 166.

¹⁸ The Second Republic and the Civil War have generated a high number of publications. The reader can look up the references to specialized literature in the classic texts on the history of the Church in Spain: Carcel, "El liberalismo en el poder"; Idem, *Historia de la Iglesia en la España contemporánea*; Andres-Gallego, *La Iglesia en la España contemporánea*.

have questioned the traditional assumption that the seven-year long dictatorial regime provided the Church with special privileges, but it is true that the regime's rhetoric and society's general perception of it allow us to think of the existence of a considerable degree of understanding between the Catholic world and the dictator's rule. This perception certainly claimed its lot when passions overflowed after the Republic was proclaimed in 1931.¹⁹ Two basic questions provoked confrontations between Republican politicians and the Catholic Church: the Constitution and education. The Republican Constitution, in its 26th article, stated that religious orders could neither accumulate properties nor develop industrial, commercial or educational activities, being subject to general fiscal legislation.²⁰ Also, those orders which, in addition to the three canonical vows, imposed a special fourth vow of obedience to an authority other than the legitimate one of the Spanish State were abolished; this was the reason for the abolition and expulsion of the Jesuits. Regarding education, the discussion focused on multi-grade schools and on the possibility for religious orders to preserve their schools.²¹ At the end of the parliamentary debates, "the existence of private educational institutions" was explicitly accepted, because the amendment proposing to exclude teachers belonging to religious orders was not passed. This means that, even if religious orders were not allowed to own and manage educational institutions, the members of these orders could teach in the surviving Catholic schools.

The Second Republic was confronted with a disoriented Catholic hierarchy. It took the Church many months to reach a consensus and to decide on the best actions to undertake regarding its properties.²² The relationship between the government and the Church was affected by the government's confiscation of a series of documents related to Cardinal Segura (the cardinal primate of Spain) in which parish priests were invited to sell the goods and valuable objects of their parishes. This caused the indignation of the anticlericals and precipitated the decision of the government to forbid those sales.²³ The interception of some documents from the bishop of Vitoria did not help either: among them, there was a report that advised to feign the selling of ecclesiastical properties to third persons not related to the Church and, to any possible extent, to locate all properties in foreign countries.²⁴ The content of these documents confirmed and accelerated the government's procedures that led to the publication of the 20 August 1931 Decree which suspended the selling, transferring and levying taxes on personal properties, real estate or real rights of the Church, religious orders, institutes and houses.

¹⁹ Callahan, *La iglesia católica en España*, 181.

²⁰ Bernecker, *España entre la tradición y la modernidad*, 254.

²¹ On multi-grade schools, legislation on them and the position adopted by the hierarchy, see Frias, *Iglesia y Constitución*, 393 ff.

²² "[...] in particular regarding the protection and defence of ecclesiastical properties" said Cardinal Segura. Frias, *Iglesia y Constitución*, 6.

²³ Cabrera, "Proclamación de la República", 16.

²⁴ For the confiscation of documents belonging to the general vicar of Vitoria in 1931, see Verdoy, *Los bienes de los jesuitas*, 85.

TWO ORDERS, TWO STYLES²⁵

It is impossible in this article to tackle all the religious orders active in Spain during the first third of the twentieth century. The archives that need to be consulted for research of this scope are too scattered geographically, while the documents of many religious orders were unpardonably destroyed in the assaults on and fires set in convents and monasteries between 1931 and 1939. In this article, we therefore focus our attention on the patrimonial strategies of two religious orders, clearly different according to their origin, dedication and objectives: the Order of Saint Benedict (the Benedictines) and the Order of the Poor Clerics Regular of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools (the Piarists). Based on the prolific literature and some archival research, additional comparisons will be made with the Society of Jesus.²⁶

Benedictine monks do not form a hierarchically structured monastic order, although some monasteries were grouped into congregations (e.g. the congregation of Beuron). However, the Monastery of Montserrat was always independent of any type of hierarchically superior organization. The author of the rule, Saint Benedict (480-547), did not intend to found a religious order, but was simply trying to regulate one monastery (Montecasino) and, even if he foresaw that other institutions would adopt his monastic code, he did not establish any link or federation among them. Thus, it is not strange that the Benedictines did not form a homogeneous, unified and centralized monastic order and that they have only recently created some minimal cohesion between their monasteries. Benedictine communities lived in their isolated monasteries, dedicated to study, praying and work. This is why the documents of the order are so widely scattered: each monastery holds and preserves its own archives and there is no hierarchical system to safeguard and watch over them. For this study, we have selected the most relevant example of all Benedictine centres in Spain: the Monastery of Montserrat (Catalonia).

The second order researched in this article are the Piarists, which is the most representative educational order among those settled in Spain. In 1867, 31 out of 62 religious houses belonged to the Piarists and they counted 548 members out of the 1,506 living in Spain.²⁷ Together with the Jesuits the Piarists were the most important educational congregation in Spain. There were, however, many differences between them concerning their philosophies, their foundations, their student bodies and their different behaviours conditioned by their origin and accumulated history. Thus, while the Jesuits educated the upper and upper-middle classes in Spain, the Piarists

²⁵ For this research we have enjoyed all the facilities kindly provided by the archivists of the two orders. To mention them all would take too long and there would always be someone missing. Not being an archivist himself, Father Josep-Enric Parellada (the rector of the Monastery of Montserrat) put us on our way; his name was a key that opened the most fascinating doors for us.

²⁶ On the Society of Jesus, see Revuelta, *La compañía de Jesús*, I and II; Idem, *Los colegios de jesuitas*; VV.AA., *Memorias del P. Luis Martín*; Soto, *Los jesuitas en Andalucía*; Idem, *El colegio jesuita de San Estanislao en Málaga*; Verdoy, *Los bienes de los jesuitas*. We have also used primary documents from the Society of Jesus, in particular the documents from the archives in Alcalá de Henares (Province of Castile) and Granada (Province of Andalusia, once it was segregated from Castile).

²⁷ That year the Jesuits only had 5 religious houses and 221 members. Carcel, "El liberalismo en el poder", 222.

concentrated their work in neighbourhoods populated by artisans and workers.²⁸ The abilities of each order to gather the essential resources to found schools were determined by the social origins of the pupils registered in them. The Jesuits profited from the contributions made by their pupils' families and used a model based on *sociedades anónimas*²⁹, created by the pupils' parents, which took care of building the school and later on transferred it to the Society of Jesus, once the latter had paid for it in comfortable instalments.³⁰ Meanwhile, the Piarists had to wait for the sponsorship of a local top-man who called on them to found a school or for the funds and sites offered by local authorities, or for a combination of both possibilities, and they were always dependant on the local patrons who managed the foundation that maintained the school. Those local patrons obviously were the local political authorities, and this therefore implied dependence on the ever-changing political situation.

Unlike the Benedictines, the Piarists (and the Jesuits) are a structured order and their archives are organized into ecclesiastical provinces. Each educational centre, religious house or seminar has its own archives but, at least, there has been a process of centralization of a considerable number of collections into provincial archives. We have consulted those of the Province of Castile, which covered the Spanish regions of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, Vasconia, Old Castile, New Castile, Andalusia and Murcia; those archives are kept in Madrid.³¹

In the following sections we focus on how the religious orders administered their patrimony in order to preserve it, as their primary objective, and to improve their income or to reach more citizens, as secondary objectives. The management of ecclesiastical properties was determined by a series of crossed variables: the type of patrimony to be preserved; whether the property was rural or urban, or if it had an economic use or not; the historical memory of each order, which determined present decisions according to how the order had sorted out similar situations in the past and

²⁸ The founder, Saint Joseph of Calasanz, opened the first popular, public and free school known in Europe as early as 1597. On the other hand, the Jesuits enjoyed more support from their benefactors to the point that "it can be stated that among their worries in that time, economics was not the main one". Verdoy, *Los bienes de los jesuitas*, 41.

²⁹ The Spanish term *sociedad anónima* is similar to the French *société anonyme*, the Belgian *naamloze vennootschap/société anonyme* or the English *public limited company*. In this article, we refer to *sociedades anónimas* whose capital is divided into shares privately held outside the stock exchange.

³⁰ The mechanism for creating schools had been tremendously useful to the Society of Jesus during the 1868 Revolution. This way, for example, the school in El Puerto de Santa María (Cádiz) was under the name of the *sociedad anónima* formed by the founding associates of the school, something which allowed them to claim the property of the building and all the material inside. But they also introduced the position of 'legal director' of the school, which was occupied not by a Jesuit but by someone from the Owners Committee so that he could relate to the political power, while the Jesuits were in charge of the academic direction of the centre. The cost of the schools was prorated in comfortable instalments. Revuelta, *La compañía de Jesús*, 478-481.

³¹ Vasconia became a Piarist Province in 1933.

to the success obtained before; and the origin of the property to be preserved (private donation, purchase, usufruct inherited from benefactors, local patrons, etc.).³²

MONTSERRAT AND ITS PROPERTIES: PRECAUTION AND NIMBLENESS

The first fact differentiating Benedictines, on the one side, from Piarists and Jesuits, on the other, is the relative isolation in which the Benedictine monastic community lived. The disconnection with the daily evolution of Spain together with the conservative and fearful character of Abbot Deàs, elected in 1885, made the Benedictine community live in permanent fear regarding governmental intentions, always perceived as malicious and aimed against religious people. Years before, the community had been authorized by Rome to sell some personal estate in order to avoid forced transfers or burglary.³³ During the nineteenth century, the feeling of siege did not subside and around 1890 Abbot Deàs demanded permission from the ecclesiastical authorities to hide jewels and money, thus avoiding undetermined future dangers.³⁴ In 1906, in the middle of the anticlerical turmoil, the monks were allowed by Rome to transfer all the properties that the Monastery of Montserrat still possessed.³⁵ The transfer was done as ‘a lay and private’ procedure in the benefit of trustworthy monks who became full owners of the goods, now registered under their name: the vineyards of El Bruch were transferred to Brother Pelegrín Bosch³⁶; ‘Manso Estruch’, a 138-hectare estate was registered under the name of Antonio Marcet i Poal (later abbot); a 13-hectare estate called ‘Castell del Mas’ and some adjacent 17 hectares were under the name of Josep Deàs (the abbot).³⁷ Nevertheless, this procedure left the strategy of hiding and safeguarding the community’s patrimony incomplete since, first of all, it did not prevent all risks - the government could disentail the properties of the members of religious orders as much as those of the orders themselves - and, secondly, it generated heavy costs, among them the transfer tax (20% of the property value) to be paid each time one of the monks died.

The apprehension of the Benedictines, especially of their abbot, increased in a parallel manner to anticlericalism during the first decade of the twentieth century

³² The congregations rebuilt their patrimonies thanks to private donations. These patrimonies were mostly urban and not at all insignificant, considering the concentration of orders in the cities and their major dedication to teaching, an activity that forced them to purchase buildings on which to establish their schools. Andres-Gallego, *La Iglesia en la España contemporánea*, 285.

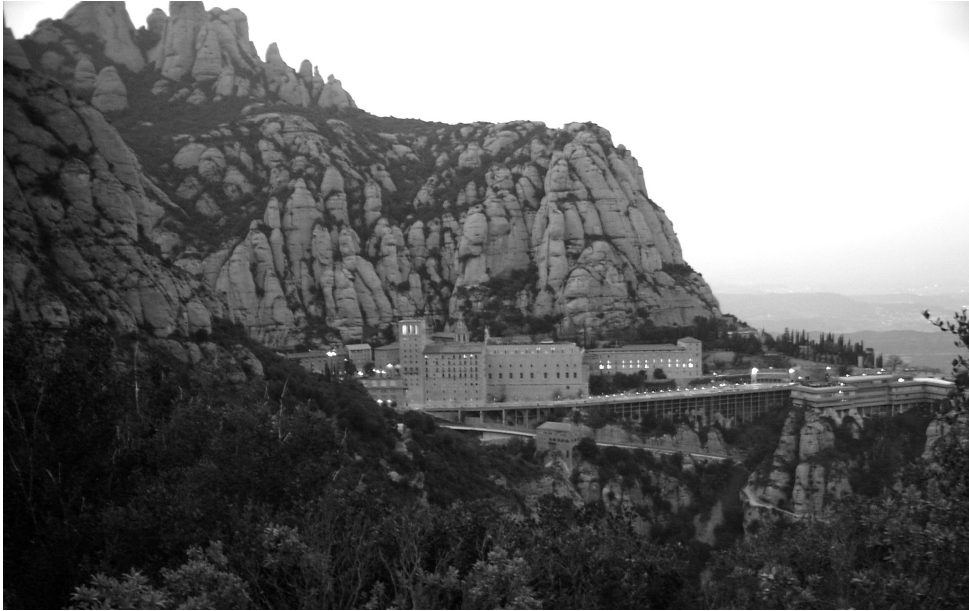
³³ AM: Council Book, 30 March 1883.

³⁴ Ibidem, 30 January 1890.

³⁵ AM: Letter of Abbot Deàs. The authorities in Rome must have worried about the governmental attitude towards the clergy and the Concordat. Thus, the cardinal primate addressed the king with the following words “in the articles referring to the Religious Associations and Institutions, the project above mentioned is notoriously bad and contrary to the sanctions of the Church”, quoted in Díaz, “La ‘Ley del Candado’ en Álava”, 146.

³⁶ AM: Council Book, 9 June 1892.

³⁷ AM, Fons LARSA, box 2, file 4.4: List of properties of La Agrícola Regional, S.A.



The Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat.

[Photo by the author]

and was exacerbated by the events of the Tragic Week in Barcelona. These, along with the passing of the Padlock Law, pushed Abbot Deàs to search for the necessary mechanisms to prevent the Spanish State from confiscating the community's properties. In 1911, aiming to find a definite solution for the problem, the abbot asked for technical help from trustworthy jurists who drew the main lines of a camouflage operation for the community's rural properties. The plan consisted in creating a *sociedad anónima*, preferably located abroad, capitalized with bearer shares, as a perfect smokescreen to hide the estates. Bearer shares would allow the community to permanently keep the ownership of the *sociedad anónima*: they could transfer it to other owners and recover it quite easily according to the moment's situation without incurring expenses, because the Spanish Commercial Code acknowledged the bearer's ownership of the share as long as the contrary was not proved. The *sociedad anónima* thus created would acquire the Benedictines' rural properties and exploit them on its own. The ideal situation would include the hiring of those properties to the community in exchange for the corresponding fee, this way holding up the fiction of the properties' transfer.

Once the anticlerical storm of the 1910s was over, the mercantile constitution of the *sociedad anónima* was postponed. It was not until 1913, with Abbot Marcet already at the head of the monastery, when 'La Agrícola Regional S.A. - LARSA' (The Regional Agrarian Plc. - LARSA) was created with a capital of 300,000 pesetas represented by 300 bearer shares. According to the title deeds, the commercial objects of the company were land purchase and sale (rural and urban estates), the exploitation of agricultural products and other legal business to be agreed upon by the share-

holders.³⁸ The name chosen for the company meant to avoid raising suspicions about its possible bond with the Benedictine congregation.³⁹ To increase the distance, an Administration Board was designated which was alien to the order, though at the same time controlled by it: most of the members were family of the monks or trusted laypersons. The founder share-holders were Francisco Cabot i Rovira, Juan Marcet i Palet (the abbot's cousin), Juan Colomé i Trayté (trustworthy lawyer of abbots Deàs and Marcet), José Marcet i Poal (the abbot's brother), Francisco Suñol i Baulenas (brother to a Benedictine monk), Francisco Mundó i Fló (the abbot's brother-in-law).⁴⁰

The first step, after the pertinent permission of the community, was to transfer the estates owned by the monks.⁴¹ The operation was executed by feigning a bill of sale with a price of 127,100 pesetas paid in exchange for all the estates, the area of which amounted to 185 hectares.⁴² The following step, according to the plan, was to rent those properties, and it was settled in 1914 that they would be let at a price of 100,000 pesetas per year. And last but not least, LARSA kept on increasing and consolidating the Benedictine patrimony through new purchases. Thus, a small property in Collbató, 1 hectare in size, was bought for 500 pesetas and this allowed finalizing the estate of Manso Estruch. In 1924, the estate of Can Martorell - about 27 hectares - was bought after the community was granted a loan of 25,000 pesetas - redeemable in five years - which they executed in favour of LARSA. In 1931 a small estate, adjacent to that of Can Estruch, was acquired at a price of 600 pesetas. In order to improve the patrimonial situation of the recently acquired plots, LARSA engaged in the purchase of *rabassas*, ground rents and emphyteusis, still existing in those areas, so that in January 1919 128,025 pesetas had been put into this activity.⁴³

However, LARSA did not cover all the economic activities of the monastery. It was necessary to decide what to do with the rooms annexed to the monastery, where different services were offered to the pilgrims arriving to worship Our Lady of Montserrat. The use of those buildings was not defined from a juridical point of view, a situ-

³⁸ AL: LARSA's title deeds.

³⁹ The decisions of the Benedictines were more effective than those of the Jesuits. The latter had *sociedades anónimas* from the last third of the 19th century. However, as they acknowledged themselves in 1931, "those created in the past were badly constituted and they gave themselves away". Verday, *Los bienes de los jesuitas*, 63.

⁴⁰ AM, Fons LARSA, box 2: Copy of the Record Book of LARSA.

⁴¹ "Considering the difficulties to constitute a company in the way agreed by the Council on the meeting of 4 March 1913, the Rev. Father, following the instructions given by the Council and the Community on 6 December 1906 and with the permission of the Superiors, decided to sell the properties that he, Rev. Father Abbot Deàs, and Brother Pelegrín Bosch owned, respectively, in the municipalities of Collbató and Esparraguera, and of Esparraguera, Monistrol and El Bruch, to the *sociedad anónima* La Agrícola Regional S.A., founded and located in Barcelona." AM: Council Book, 19 June 1914.

⁴² Manso Estruch was sold for 62,300 pesetas (32,500 pesetas for the part in Esparraguera and 29,800 pesetas for that in Collbató), an estate on the mountain of Montserrat for 2,800 pesetas, Manso Castell for 45,500 pesetas, an adjacent rural estate for 11,000 pesetas, another adjacent rural estate for 500 pesetas, one vineyard in El Bruch for 500 pesetas. AM, Fons LARSA, box 2, file 4.4: List of properties of La Agrícola Regional, S.A.

⁴³ The records of LARSA's Administration Council reflect all the purchases of the company as well as the liberation of taxes (*rabassas*, ground rents and others). AL and AM.

ation from which everyone profited. Built in the mountain, which actually belonged to the diocese of the bishop of Barcelona, the annexes could not be registered by the Benedictines under their name. But the bishop did not claim them as his. For this reason, when the Second Republic was proclaimed in Spain in April 1931, the fears and anxieties emerged again, stronger than ever, inside the community.⁴⁴

The Benedictines showed nimbleness and reflexes before the new political scenario. In May 1931 the community adopted a series of decisions, the first of which was to change the current account holders, who now were to be, under a lay and personal concept, the abbot and the treasurer of the monastery. Also, they purchased land in Andorra - under the umbrella of a second *sociedad anónima* called 'Cultural Andorrana' - in order to have a place in which "to seek refuge in case the expulsion of religious orders should happen" ("refugiar-se la Comunitat en cas de venir l'expulsió de les ordes religioses", in Catalanian). A third decision was to transfer to La Agrícola Regional all the goods and services managed by the community: the grocery store, the liquor factory, the rooms, the hotel and restaurant, the garage and the different restaurants. This was complemented with the sale or mortgage of the religious house in Barcelona. All of it together allowed the raising of funds for the purchases in Andorra.⁴⁵ Since the parliamentary debates about the Constitution, which would ban all economic activities by religious institutes, were advancing, in July 1931 the different services were leased - not transferred (something cannot be sold that does not belong to anyone) - to LARSA.⁴⁶

The agreement included the lease of the buildings - 200,000 pesetas per year - and the purchase of personal estate by LARSA. The contract was signed in August, just a few days before the publication of the 20 August 1931 Decree. In other words, the monks were monetizing all the personal estate used for their different businesses, since it was preferable to have liquidity in case they were expelled from the country.

The fourth decision, which had long-term effects, affected the community's investments, which had already for some time been focused on liquid assets that could be easily transported and hid away in fear of the government's actions. For example: "in the same session the Father Treasurer [...] was given the task, trusting his good sense, of investing a certain amount of State or Railway titles, as it had been done other times before, although it may not be noted in this book, as it was neither noted that permission was granted to him, as it was reminded in the reunion mass, to invest in titles whatever is earned from the debt of Santa Clara, because from the 16,000 *duros* owed to us, 9,000 were already in titles for the Choir."⁴⁷

This way, in 1933, most Benedictine properties consisted of personal estate easily transportable or convertible, and this matched the fact that the monastery's

⁴⁴ The burning of churches and convents in Madrid, Málaga and Seville increased the worry of the Benedictines and accelerated all formalities.

⁴⁵ AM: Council Book, 1 May and 10 September 1931.

⁴⁶ The transfers were done just in time since the Republican Constitution stated that "religious orders could neither accumulate goods nor develop industrial, commercial or educational activities, being subject to general fiscal legislation". Bernecker, *España entre la tradición y la modernidad*, 254.

⁴⁷ AM: Council Book, 9 February 1892.

management quickly invested all excess liquidity.⁴⁸ The nominal value of the portfolio in 1933 amounted to 458,775 pesetas, 39,705 Chilean dollars and 18,300 Italian lire. Of the part valued in pesetas, 36.35% (166,800 pesetas) was invested into public debt while 63.65% (291,975 pesetas) had been put into company bonds. The Chilean currency was almost totally invested into company bonds, thus balancing the investment into Italian public debt.⁴⁹

Finally, in relation to the management of LARSA as a company, we can see how during the years of the Second Republic, the Benedictines, through the Administration Board of the *sociedad anónima*, started a decapitalization process by paying high dividends that were charged both on each year's profits and on the accumulated reserves. In short, the managers of LARSA decapitalized the company aiming to increase the community's liquidity, so that it could be used either for the purchases in Andorra, to diversify investments (especially abroad) or to provide the monks with money before they were possibly expelled from the country.

THE PIARISTS: TRUST IN THEIR OWN HISTORY

The good treatment given by the Spanish Liberal governments to the Pious Schools Order during the nineteenth century, due to their dedication to education among the neediest classes, allowed the order to avoid the series of anticlerical decrees. Thus, the Piarists dodged the 1835 Decree that meant the closing of all monasteries with less than twelve members, as well as the 1836 Decree that put up for sale the real estate of all religious communities. And when the 1837 Decree was passed, they managed to save almost all the Piarist houses since the government allowed the Piarist General to decide which houses should be closed and which could maintain their teaching activities. Therefore, after the restoration of the activity of religious orders in Spain in 1845, the Piarists still stood in the same position as at the beginning of the century. Around 1846, the order was completely established and active in 31 houses, while 548 members worked across the whole territory of Spain. The Piarists came out from the 1868 Revolution and the Revolutionary Six-Year Period undamaged thanks to a special order from the Ministry of Grace and Justice which excluded them from the abolition sentence of all the religious communities re-established or created after 1835.⁵⁰ During the Bourbon Restoration period, the order was strengthened to the point where in 1909 it had 1,383 members.⁵¹

⁴⁸ For example, there are references in the Council Book (5 July and 16 September 1913, and 17 January 1914) of agreements reached by the community to invest into *Riegos del Ebro* (25,000 pesetas), into public debt at 4% (25,000 pesetas), and 10,000 *reales* into the 'Turkish loan' that were finally reduced to 5,000, the other 5,000 being destined to bonds for the railway of San Juan de las Abadesas.

⁴⁹ AM, Fons LARSA, box 1: Legalization of LARSA according to the laws of the Republic (*Legalització de LARSA segons les lleis de la República*), 26 August 1933.

⁵⁰ "an Order of 11 November 1868, dictated by the Minister of Grace and Justice, had settled that all Piarist schools, taking into account their history, the need of schools and the impossibility of the Provincial Councils to provide them, could continue their work as public education institutions." Bandrés, *Diccionario enciclopédico escolar*, 260.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 44 ff.

Only when the anticlerical wave at the beginning of the twentieth century was about to occur, the Piarists first suffered from grave difficulties, which were geographically circumscribed to the city of Barcelona. During the Tragic Week, the school in Balaguer was only saved thanks to the intervention of the Civil Guard, while the Royal School of San Antón was set on fire. The building and the provincial and collegial archives it contained was totally lost in the incident. The fire in this school in Barcelona should have meant a breaking point in the strategy of the Spanish Pious Schools. Never before had the order been under attack, and the situation should have made it aware of the political fault line that was increasingly dividing Spanish society. But there was no reaction whatsoever from the order and its members have never been able to understand the meaning of what happened during those fateful days, actually the beginning of the end of the popular support they had always enjoyed.⁵² During the Second Republic, the Piarists continued to believe they were under protection due to their exemplary trajectory, the favourable disposition of the Spanish political elites towards them - they had received preferential treatment in all previous occasions - and the high regard for their work treasured by the most popular classes in Spanish society. In a word, the Piarists trusted that their history would help them solve difficulties, and it was exactly this confidence which prevented them from getting ready to adapt themselves to the new political scenario brought on by the Second Republic and to the cruelest reality of the later Civil War.

The Jesuits were much more active than the Piarists at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, even if Verdoy accuses them of being resistant to transformation and inflexible in what concerns politics, so that they did not adapt themselves to the changes imposed by the Second Republic.⁵³ This author, however, admits that the provincial head of León, six months before the advent of the Republic, already called for the goods to be concealed and the properties disguised, while in Madrid the religious house Superior was already preparing escape routes out of the country for his Jesuits at the end of 1930. Just after the new regime had been proclaimed (14 April 1931), the provincial fathers held a meeting (27 April) meant to define the way to secure the order's personal estate and to decide what to do with their *sociedades anónimas*.⁵⁴ They agreed to ask Rome for permission to transfer, mortgage or pledge their properties (the permission was granted on 30 April) and to improve the model of *sociedades anónimas*. Those created before the Republic were

⁵² "The reason for this arson is a question that has been answered in several ways. The collective memory still remembered what had happened in the so-called 'friars killing' during the 1835 Revolution, when a picket tried to set fire to the school, and a voice rose among its members detaining them with its cry: 'not to these, they teach the people'. According to some witnesses, the fire was provoked by the impassioned speeches of Ferrer i Guardia, founder of the anarchist 'Modern School'; according to others, the school was an accidental objective, not being a pre-fixed intention; and finally, others think the cause was the existing differentiation in the school between pupils that paid for their studies and pupils from poorer families who were granted scholarships." Bandrés, *Diccionario enciclopédico escolapio*, 319.

⁵³ "The paradox was that, seeing and suffering in their own body and in their works the situation that was about to come, they did not know and could not react. It was certainly difficult to change overnight [...]" Verdoy, *Los bienes de los jesuitas*, 52.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 53-54; 62 ff.

generally badly constituted and managed, so that it was quite easy to know who was their real owner, also because their names clearly showed their belonging to a religious institute.⁵⁵

In a different line, more up-to-date than the one maintained until then with the *sociedades anónimas*, on 24 December 1931 the Superior of the Jesuits in Madrid carried out a fake sale of the order's ecclesiastical properties in Madrid (the residence, seminar, church and some plots) that were already detached from the schools, and functioned as if they belonged to *sociedades anónimas*. The buyer was a Mr Edmondo Quattrocchi (a Frenchman married to the North American Flora Crockett), who lived in Paris.⁵⁶ In order to conceal these buildings and plots, several mortgages were signed by the new owner (Mr Quattrocchi) and different people, all of them living in Madrid. In this case, the strategy had excellent results since not one of the segregated properties was lost during the Republic or the Civil War, while the religious buildings in the Republican area were all occupied. The success of the operation is proved by the fact that, despite the Jesuits being dispossessed of all their properties (including those apparently concealed under *sociedades anónimas*), these were not confiscated by the Republican government, the buildings were not occupied during the war and in 1940 the Jesuits recovered them once their stratagem was brought to light.⁵⁷

To analyse the economic evolution and the strategies used to manage the patrimony of the Pious Schools, we have used the archives of the Province of Castile, which was the most important of all Piarist provinces in Spain, given its extension and the number of centres and religious members in it (table 1). As an educational and urban order, the Pious Schools considered that their primary and secondary education schools, founded during the last third of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (three of them), were the essential segment of their patrimony. In the buildings and plots devoted to their educational work lay both the *raison d'être* of the Piarists and the core of their economic activity, so that defending them was their main worry.

⁵⁵ The names chosen by the Jesuits for their *sociedades anónimas* showed their origin: La Educación, S.A., La Instrucción, S.A., La Instrucción Católica, S.A., o La Enseñanza Católica, S.A. (Education Plc., Instruction Plc., Catholic Instruction Plc. or Catholic Education Plc.).

⁵⁶ The properties, with their sale prices, were: an urban property in Isabel la Católica Street (984 m²) for 440,000 pesetas; another urban property in Isabel la Católica Street (2,883.33 m²) for 1,557,400 pesetas including a Catholic church and rooms for the members of the congregation; an urban property in San Bernardo Street (412.95 m²) for 177,700 pesetas; a plot of land in San Bernardo Street (573 m²) for 175,000 pesetas; another plot in San Bernardo Street (591.02 m²) for 100,000 pesetas; and an urban property in San Bernardo Street (588.1 m²) for 250,000 pesetas. ASJAH, Box 81.

⁵⁷ Verdoy, *Los bienes de los jesuitas*, dedicates his book to the confiscation of Jesuit properties by the Republican governments without mentioning if they actually were in the register of confiscated properties. "In the deed number one hundred fifty seven, bestowed before me on 19 January 1940 by the parties appearing in the same concept as that on which they intervene, it was declared at all the effects included in the Law of 30 December last year that the sale expressed in the deed of 31 May 1931 was celebrated only to avoid that the estates to which it refers were confiscated for being the property of the Society of Jesus and in consequence, Mr Edmondo Quattrocchi was but an interposed person since the Society of Jesus had always been the owner and had owned and possessed them through the power conferred to the appearing party Mr Muguruza by designation of the Society of Jesus itself." ASJAH, Box 81. APT. Section of foundations IV: Sale deed of 1 May 1940.

TABLE 1
EVOLUTION OF THE PIARIST PROVINCE OF CASTILE

Year	Houses*	Religious members	Novices	Pupils
1899	14	316	35	6,724
1903	15	349	39	5,642
1915	15	370	16	6,814
1922	16	370	23	7,698
1928	17	379	20	10,746

*The word 'houses' includes the schools, residences and seminars that the Piarists had in the Province.

There were fourteen schools: Granada (1860), Alcalá de Henares (1862), Úbeda (1861-1920), Yecla (1858-1931), Celanova (1868-1930), Sanlúcar de Barrameda (1868), Toro (1870), Monforte de Lemos (1873), El Escorial (1872-1875), Bilbao (1893), Seville (1888), Linares (1920), Calasancio in Madrid (1922) and Santander (1926). The one in Almodóvar was closed (1856).

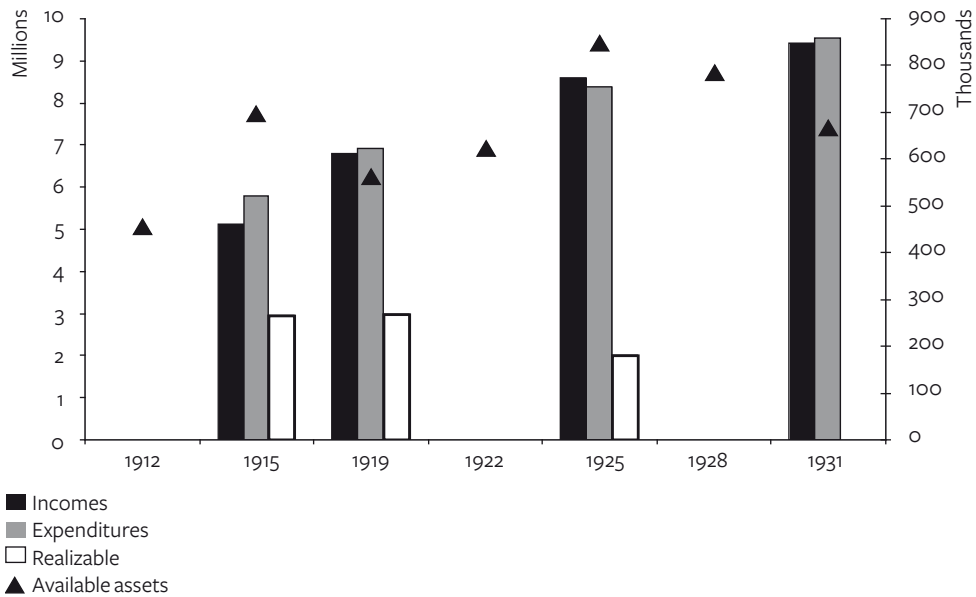
Source: Bandrés, *Diccionario enciclopédico escolapio*, 145.

The information collected is that provided by the records of the provincial meetings celebrated every three years, with some interruptions. The Council's documents almost always include the economic report that the Provincial Father had to present to be sanctioned in the meeting. The records, with an unequalled wealth of data, provide the main economic information of the Province and the schools integrated in it. The information is presented like the profit and loss statement - extremely aggregated - of a firm, and includes incomes, expenditures and balances. Quite often, the Provincial Father's report contained the amounts the schools owed each other, as well as partial information on the debts to external entities and the amounts invested in State securities from which some income was drawn for the schools. The value of the provincial patrimony is also known since the insurance company, 'Seguros Covadonga S.A.', did a valuation in 1935 which estimated the buildings at 18,185,200 pesetas and their contents at 3 million pesetas.⁵⁸

From these data, we can reconstruct the economic situation in the Province and introduce some tools, typical of accounting analysis, to consolidate the hypothesis according to which the economic-financial situation of the Province of Castile in the years prior to the Second Republic was quite solvent (figure 1). The numbers show a financially flourishing Piarist order: the Province accumulated fixed assets valued at more than 21 million pesetas, and completed its assets with available assets - the positive balance on closing every three-year period - fluctuating between 5 and 9 million pesetas, as well as with realizable assets - treasury securities at a 4% interest rate and some incomes stipulated by the benefactors - that reached a peak of 3 million

⁵⁸ The valuation was done at the moment that the contract with the insurance company was signed for a policy against fire, deterioration and ransacking due exclusively to mutiny or popular revolt. PA, Box 669-4: Letter from SADEL to the Provincial Father of Castile.

FIGURE 1
INCOMES, EXPENDITURES, REALIZABLE (IN MILLIONS OF PESETAS) AND AVAILABLE
ASSETS (IN THOUSANDS OF PESETAS) OF THE PIARIST PROVINCE OF CASTILE



Source: *Capitulum Provinciale Castellae*. Piarist archive, box 17. Own calculations.

pesetas between 1915 and 1919 and which, even diminishing, added up to 2 million in 1925.⁵⁹ This means the Province of Castile enjoyed a liquidity which meant 12% to 14% of its total assets; these were definitely very high values. The debts of the Province amounted to 839,121.15 pesetas in 1919, but in 1925 they had increased to 1,711,863.07 pesetas. Obviously enough, the Piarist Province was not a firm and did not determine its social capital and reserves, thus reducing the possibility to calculate an accounting ratio. The best image of their financial horizon was the treasury ratio which in 1919 was 4.2. By 1925 it went down to 1.6.⁶⁰ Despite this, the values are incredibly high when compared with those of most Spanish firms in the same period.⁶¹

Behind the economic results, it is easy to see that the financial strategy that guided the Province of Castile matched that of the Spanish family firms: reinvestment

⁵⁹ The Piarists' availability of liquidity contrasted with the lack of liquidity of the Jesuits, especially in the Provinces of Aragón and León. Verdoy, *Los bienes de los jesuitas* and Andres-Gallego, *La Iglesia en la España contemporánea*.

⁶⁰ The ratio aims at measuring the capacity of the firm to confront its short-term debts with those assets available in the short-term and shows us the degree of the firm's financial soundness.

⁶¹ The values of the treasury ratio for Spanish cotton producers, in the same period, fluctuated between 0.5 and 0.8, and were the highest among Spanish companies in those years. Fernandez Roca, "Managerial Strategies".

of the profits, strong cash availability, and internal indebtedness within the family.⁶² In this particular case, the Province functioned like a family firm because the schools in the Province loaned money to each other, so that those with better results helped finance the smaller ones or those with lower incomes. The great lenders were the schools of San Antón, Villacarriedo, Getafe and San Fernando, while two stood out as demanding the most funds: the schools of Bilbao and the new Our Lady school in Logroño.⁶³

The economic situation, which had been reasonably dealt with during the first three decades of the twentieth century, suffered much after the local elections of 1931 which elected the left-wing parties to rule the town councils. Local representatives sat on the boards of the foundations created to run the Piarist schools. The municipal subsidies which had initially been intended to attract the order to a town were removed everywhere. There were cases in which the Piarists were expelled from the buildings they had in usufruct, as, for example, in Alcalá de Henares (Madrid), where the owners of the building offered it to the State to create a secondary school, or in Daroca (Zaragoza), where only the neighbours' intervention stopped the Piarists from being expelled from the school they ran. We do not know what the economic evolution of the order was during the Republican period since the economic report presented at the 1934 meeting has not been preserved. It is to be suspected that in those years, after the transfer of schools - the main financial source - to SADEL (see *infra*), the incomes were seriously reduced.

Severe economic restrictions were not the main worry of the Piarists. For them, the objective to be achieved, whatever the sacrifice it meant, was to guarantee the functioning of schools and to continue the educational task of the order without restrictions. The possibility to remain at the head of the schools diminished as the consecutive anticlerical laws of the Second Republic (see *supra*) were passed. In the new political constellation after 1931, what was the strategy of the Piarists to secure their properties and the opening of schools? Which were their main goals? Once the teaching activity became prohibited for religious congregations, the Piarist order followed two alternate paths in order to keep their schools open.

In the Province of Catalonia, they chose the formula of transferring the ownership of the schools and of buildings they occupied to mutual insurance companies that were founded *ad hoc* by the Parents Associations.⁶⁴ This way, the school in Balaguer was transferred to the 'Mutua Maragall' in 1933; the school in Igualada was sold to the 'Mutua Escolar Igualadina' (1934) which gave its name to the new centre⁶⁵; the Royal School of San Antón became the 'Mutua Docente Padre Eduardo Llanas' in 1933, while the school in Sabadell became the 'Mutua Félix Amat'; in Calella they

⁶² Idem, "The Adaptative strategies of Spanish Cotton Industry Companies"; Idem, "Managerial Strategies".

⁶³ PA, box 17: *Capitulum Provinciale Castellae*.

⁶⁴ For more information on the Piarist Province of Catalonia, see Bandrés, *Diccionario enciclopédico escolapio*.

⁶⁵ In this case, we know the names of the managers of the Mutua: the president was Mr Morera y Mestre; the Council was formed by Mr Francisco Ribalta, Mr Manuel Mateu, Mr José Lladó, Mr Salvador Cuadras, Mr Antonio Gabarró and Mr Jaime Ortínez. All of them belonged to local middle class families.

created the 'Mutua Escolar Arzobispo Costa y Fornaguera', and for the new school named Our Lady of the Pious Schools (Barcelona), founded after the fire in the school of San Antón in 1909, the 'Mutua Escolar Bernat Muge' was created. The School of Balmes in Barcelona was transferred to its Parents Association. The Royal School of Sarrià is the only one of which we have no information regarding the possibility of it being covered by an institution.

The second option was to transfer the schools to any of the national Catholic associations that vigorously emerged during the Second Republic.⁶⁶ Most Piarist schools in the Provinces of Castile and Valencia chose to be integrated into the 'Sociedad Anónima de Enseñanza Libre - SADEL' (Public Limited Company of Free Education - SADEL), which had been founded in 1933 by the Catholic Parents Confederation (CONCAPA) with the aim of promoting and developing Catholic education in Spain while, at the same time, bringing together and offering legal protection to all the schools previously run by religious orders.⁶⁷ SADEL profited from the electoral victory of the right-wing parties and expanded its functions during the two years from 1934-1936. In these years the educational reform undertaken in previous years was paralysed, while the policy of ousting the religious from their position as teachers was suspended, and both facts were useful to SADEL. During the Conservative two-year period, the Catholics had up to 1,519 fully functioning schools in the whole national territory. In September 1934 SADEL managed 52 of them - 34 were boarding schools - and offered Catholic education to 16,318 pupils. Nevertheless, the main difficulty in really knowing how SADEL functioned is the lack of sources. Schools hardly kept any documents since SADEL insisted on them destroying whatever papers could prove the link between the schools and the *sociedad anónima*, trying thus to preserve itself from Republican legislation and to show the maximum independence from religious institutions.

The functioning of SADEL was actually quite simple. The orders and congregations which included their schools in the *sociedad anónima* endorsed a certain part of the capital and paid the company to manage the centres. Thus, the Piarist Province of Castile endorsed 3,820 bearer shares equivalent to 191,000 pesetas. The amount corresponded exactly to the amount which SADEL had committed to buy the furniture of all the schools (San Antón, Calasancio, San Fernando, Getafe, Villacarriedo [Santander], Santander, Linares and Granada).⁶⁸ The sale included the segregation of the building (or buildings) occupied by the school, the Piarist houses and the churches in order to grant the school greater security when confronted to Republi-

⁶⁶ Among them were the 'Centro de Estudios Universitarios-CEU' (University Studies Centre, founded in 1933 by the Catholic Propaganda Association in Madrid) or the 'Cruzados de la Enseñanza' (Teaching Crusaders, an organization created by the diocese of Madrid-Alcalá for the training of catechists, and which had up to 24 schools).

⁶⁷ The presence of important right-wing politicians like Martínez de Velasco, who was the president of the Administration Council, Joaquín de Satrústegui, who was its secretary, or Antonio Royo as one of its members, was crucial. Gil, *El partido agrario español*, 617.

⁶⁸ The furniture in the centres was of the type needed to accommodate the boarders - bedrooms, kitchen, bathrooms, etc. - and to teach - desks, seats, blackboards, laboratories, etc. For example, SADEL paid 35,000 pesetas for the material inside San Fernando School, including the kitchens and the boarders' bedrooms. PA, Box 514-3.

can regulations and to prove that the sale of the school had been effective and that it was not linked to the Piarist order anymore. For example, in the Royal School of San Antón (Madrid) the ground and first floors of the building facing the street of Hortaleza, the church and its adjacent rooms, a dining-room and the bedrooms used by the members of the community were segregated and only the part of the building occupied by the school itself was thenceforward owned by SADEL.⁶⁹ The transfer was effective to the extent that when the time came to undertake some major works in the buildings, it was SADEL, as the owner, that signed the contracts with the suppliers.⁷⁰ All transactions, of buildings and furniture, were just fake sales - in exchange for shares and with money that was never actually paid - executed according to the clause of 'suspensive condition' so that, once the motives that had provoked the sale were not valid anymore, the operation had a retroactive effect.⁷¹ This is why, in November 1939, just five months after the end of the Civil War, SADEL got in touch with the Provincial Father of Castile to inform him that the Piarists had preserved, despite the disturbances and the war, "the titles of ownership and other documents relative to the building where that School was established".⁷²

In exchange for the endorsement, the Piarist Province accepted not to receive the dividend that might correspond to it at the end of each year (we do not know if this clause was only for the Piarists or if it was applied to other orders as well), to transfer whatever representation was associated with the bearer shares to a person in SADEL's Administration Council and to assume that the shares were inalienable.⁷³ To complete the capitalization of the *sociedad anónima*, SADEL located some of its shares in the hands of the pupils' parents in those schools it began to manage.⁷⁴ This possibility was seen quickly since some pupils' parents had already taken initiatives that could help them get round the Republican legislation. Thus, a group of parents of San Fernando School in Madrid had prepared informative surveys to find out how many of them would be ready to participate in creating some type of society, "a mutual, collective, partnership limited or *sociedad anónima*, or to accept the offers made by some financial entities to help", as well as to admit, in the Piarist spirit, pupils for free.⁷⁵

The list of Piarist schools associated with SADEL included all the existing ones in the Province of Castile plus most of the schools in Valencia. Two important exceptions were the school in Logroño, which after a while ended its alliance with SADEL, and the school in Sevilla, which initially preferred to stay on its own, but changed its

⁶⁹ PA, Box 546-2: Letter to SADEL.

⁷⁰ PA, Box 514-3: Contract signed by 'Schools SADEL-Scio' S.A. from Getafe (Madrid) and S.R.C. Seifert y Biezobas (boiler and heating installers).

⁷¹ PA, Box 669-4.

⁷² PA, Box 681-3: Letter from SADEL to the Provincial Father.

⁷³ PA, Box 669-4: Letter from SADEL to the Provincial Father of Castile.

⁷⁴ Ibidem: Circular from SADEL to the pupils' parents.

⁷⁵ PA, Box 292-3: Parents Association's circular.



Collection of Natural Sciences at the Piarist college of Seville, ca. 1910.
[Piarist archive, Madrid]

mind after the 1936 elections and the triumph of the Popular Front, which increased the fear of all Catholic congregations.⁷⁶

The withdrawal of the school in Logroño, together with some letters of protest written by the Piarist Provincial Father, show us that the relationship between the Catholic *sociedad anónima* and the congregations went through some ups and downs. On several occasions, SADEL and the Piarist order could not reach an agreement on how the company should manage the schools and on the costs this implied for the order. It is true that the company was in charge of all the economic and political formalities related to the school. It was responsible for the management and payment of taxes, the management of the personnel - in those years of heavy labour conflicts - and, in certain cases, it even paid the mortgages that lay upon the schools. In exchange, SADEL received a fixed income equivalent to 2% of the schools' yearly income. The amount was a source of discussion between the Piarists and the company. At the end of the 1933/34 school year, SADEL stated that the Piarists had to pay the company 30,614.37 pesetas out of the 1,530,708 pesetas the schools had earned; the Provincial Father argued that they were faced with a long list of payments which

⁷⁶ The school in Seville had other particularities since it was the only one founded as a civil company under the name of 'Manuel Pérez y Compañía'. This company donated the school buildings to the General Institute of Pious Schools the very moment it purchased them. PA, Box 600.

were actually SADEL's responsibility. The dispute got to the point that SADEL pointed out to the Father, in relation to the school in Albacete, that "if it had not been for their intervention assuming the mortgage on the school, the building would be now publicly auctioned and lost forever".⁷⁷ The amount invested in this school was 50,351 pesetas, more money than all the Piarist schools had jointly paid that year. Despite this, SADEL allowed a reduction of 29,348 pesetas on the instalment.

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous pages we have showed the strategic behaviour of the religious congregations in Spain, especially underlining the decisions adopted by them during the Second Republic. All three religious institutes discussed - Jesuits, Piarists and Benedictines - resorted to the creation of *sociedades anónimas*, but there were differences between them as well. On the one hand, the Jesuits were the first to adopt this formula to hide their schools from the eyes of those in power. Their *sociedades anónimas*, as they acknowledged themselves, were badly managed and too easily discoverable, and they produced a calamitous outcome: all the order's properties were confiscated after the expulsion of the Society of Jesus in 1931. On the other hand, the Benedictines of Montserrat proved to have wonderful reflexes considering how quickly they reacted (it took them only two weeks to transfer all their business to a firm, LARSA) by adopting a more modern *sociedad anónima* model. The name of the company, which did not provoke any suspicions, the bearer shares leaving no trace of their owners, the separate management of the company, the properties and the business, the lease of properties, etc., made the fiction of actual separation seem more plausible. Finally, the Piarists - like other orders, including some Jesuit schools - decided to transfer their schools to a *sociedad anónima* (SADEL) which managed them and instated the fiction of separation between education and properties. The system was successful during the Second Republic and the schools remained open, supported by the Conservative governments of the 1934-1936 two-year period. Because the Popular Front government was abruptly interrupted by the Civil War, we do not know if Piarist schools would have managed during the 1936/37 school year. The mechanisms of LARSA and SADEL coincided in that they were both based on bearer shares, but the Piarist Province of Castile endorsed 3,820 bearer shares while the Benedictines, at least theoretically, did not have a share, despite the 1933 inventory of goods registering 140 shares worth 70,000 pesetas.⁷⁸

But there were more similarities. For example, both SADEL and LARSA followed the same strategy regarding buildings and furniture. In both cases, the Piarists and Benedictines sold their personal estates to the companies in order to avoid having fixed assets, which they could not use in an emergency; they preferred to have liquidity. There was just one difference: while the Benedictines did achieve monetary liquidity by transferring money from their company to the Monastery, the Piarists - with

⁷⁷ PA, Box 669-4: Letter from SADEL to the Provincial Father of Castile.

⁷⁸ AM, Fons LARSA, box 1: 1933 Properties inventory. Legalization of LARSA according to the laws of the Republic (*Legalització de LARSA segons les llei de la República*), 26 August 1933.

fewer resources - exchanged their goods for the compulsory contribution to SADEL, thus preventing their liquidity from diminishing as it had done in previous years.

There is a third resemblance between the three orders: the segregation of their strictly religious buildings (church, residence, seminars) from the buildings dedicated to other functions (especially the schools). The strategy aimed to draw the attention to the main part of their urban patrimony (the schools), and away from the rest of the properties, which were very difficult to hide and which could drag the schools along in their fall. Thus, the three orders segregated their properties - the houses and church of the Jesuits in Madrid from the schools, the service buildings from the Monastery of Montserrat, the Piarist schools from their churches and residences - all of them quite successfully.

To conclude, we would like to point out that the orders acted with flexibility and promptitude in the face of the profound political and institutional changes brought by the Second Republic. It is true that precautions had already been taken during the first third of the twentieth century, especially by Jesuits and Benedictines - less so by the trustful Piarists. The orders responded quickly to the proclamation of the Republic. The Jesuits gathered their provincial fathers to analyse the new situation and concluded that the order was poorly prepared to face the new political environment. They barely had time to hide the properties that had not been yet transferred to the *sociedades anónimas*, but they were successful and managed to reorganize them. The Benedictines were swift and knew how to use the wonderful tool (LARSA) they had created years before, an umbrella to protect their rural properties, and now they concealed their businesses and personal estates. Finally, the Piarists, trusting the fact that governments - including the most anticlerical ones - had always respected them because of their dedication to the working classes, did not worry about the future of their properties. However, they finally had to use external resources in order to safeguard their goods: SADEL (a *sociedad anónima* created by the parents of their Catholic pupils) and the different mutual insurance companies founded by parents in the region of Catalonia. The degree of success differed for the three orders. Generally speaking, the new tools created in the 1910s (LARSA) or *ex professo* before the Republic was proclaimed (SADEL or the transfers done by the Jesuits in 1931) worked out well during the Republican years (the Civil War years must be considered separately). By contrast, the 'old' Jesuit *sociedades anónimas*, established to protect the order from the Liberal governments of the nineteenth century, clumsily named and poorly managed, could not withstand the attacks of a profoundly anticlerical and furiously anti-Jesuit regime. All these companies were confiscated and their goods seized.